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CHAPTER IX

THE HOUSE AND ITS BELONGINGS

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IT is singular that in a country where the pagodas and temples will compare in stately grandeur and symmetry of form with the sacred edifices of any part of the world, and where the monastic buildings, though only constructed of wood, strike the most casual observer with their shapely beauty and wealth of decoration; it is singular where there is a taste for such edifices and abundance of the architectural skill necessary to erect them, that the Burman should in the vast majority of cases live in the flimsiest of bamboo huts. The original cause may be found perhaps in the stringent regulations of the Yāzagaing. In native Burma the shape of a man's house was fixed for him by law according to his station in life. All were one-storeyed, save where exceptional royal favour had granted the spire-like roof to a distinguished noble or a feudatory chief. Brick houses were forbidden, from the apprehension that the inhabitants might take it into their heads to turn them into fortifications. Gilding was forbidden to all subjects, and permission to lacquer and paint the pillars of their houses granted to but a very few, and it was expressly laid down that no one should have an arch over his door. This may account for the paltry and even wretched appearance of most villages, but it is undeniable that though nowadays, they are very considerably more substantial, yet a rich man never by any chance thinks of building himself a grand house, and remains firmly by the unpretentious model of his ancestors. This is the more curious, because they will spare no expense to buy gay turbans and bright-coloured pasos for themselves, and costly

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517 silks for their wives. The ordinary explanation is that every one can see what clothes you wear, while few people care to come and spy out what kind of a house you live in, and how you fare. But there can be very little doubt that the real reason is a survival of the idea of the old Yāzagaing, as well as the fact that long years of custom have impressed upon everybody the opinion that there are only two forms of architecture, the secular and the ecclesiastical, and no one, no matter how sure he might be that the Government would take no notice of his ambition, would brave the denunciations of the religious by adding a spire to his house, or even adorning the gable ends with carved pinnacles and flamboyant finials of the monasteries. Consequently the one regular form prevails everywhere.

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342 576 The Burman's dwelling, then, is always shaped more or less like a marquee tent, and never more than one storey high, to avoid the humiliating possibility of the feet of some one being over your head. But the whole house stands on posts, so that the floor is seven or eight feet from the ground. It consists often of only one room, usually, however, of two or more, and to the front of the house there is always a verandah, three or four feet lower than the general level of the house, and as often as not quite open to the street, or the garden, or whatever may be in front and always to the sky. The posts which form the main or central part of the house are usually six in number, and all have their names, such as Uyu, Kya-hngan, Nyaung-yan. The south post, in the main part of the house, the Thabye-taing, is the best known, as being always adorned with leaves and particularly marked as that in the top of which most probably lives the nat-spirit of the house. A dead body, after being swathed, and while waiting for the coffin, is always placed by it.

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341 787 A house ought never to be built till the foundations have been thoroughly dug up and shown to a soothsayer. He will determine, from the substances found, whether it is a lucky place to build a house in or not. It stands to reason that the building cannot be commenced till a lucky day and hour have been sought out. There is considerable care to be observed in the selection of the timber. Posts are masculine, feminine, and neuter. Male posts are of equal size at both

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ends; females are larger at the base; those which swell out in the middle are a-thet ma-shi—without life; taing bilu, ogre's posts are largest at the top. As a general rule it may be taken for granted that if a house is built with neuter posts, its inmates will always be miserable and unlucky; if the posts are ogres, death and disaster will attend; male posts are easy-going and harmless; females, on the contrary, are fortunate and leading to honour. But it may happen that the character of the piece of ground on which the house is built upsets all these generalisations, so that it is necessary to get a wise man's opinion before you get your posts. The Deittôn gives many instructions on the subject, and among other things mentions how a man's fortune may be calculated from the Hle-ga-tit, the side pieces of the steps which lead up to the verandah. The presence or absence of knots, and if the former, their position, determines the luck of the householder.

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Poor people use bamboo instead of wood, and make their walls of mats, woven of the same substance, split up. Occasionally, however, they rise to the dignity of common jungle timber. Richer people make use of the invaluable teak, or of pyinkado (*Xylia dolabriformis*), a wood almost as durable, and equally expensive. White ants will attack neither of these. The walls of such houses are planked. The roof is sometimes composed of small flat tiles, but more commonly of thatch. This consists in most places in the Delta of dani, the leaves of the toddy palm, which are first soaked in salt water, a precaution which prevents insects from destroying them. Up country a species of grass called thekkè is universally used. This style of roofing is very satisfactory in every respect but one. It is cheap, easily put on, reasonably water-tight, but very inflammable, and consequently is not allowed in any of the larger towns in the Province. In the smaller stations, however, it is almost universal, and the consequence is that when one house takes fire, the sparks from it kindle all the others, as a matter of course. Consequently, as an imperative measure of protection, every house is provided with a long hooked bamboo, called a mi-cheit, by means of which to pull off all the thatch as soon as a fire breaks out in the neighbourhood, and in

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from the pitiless sun and the raging of the storms. This is the explanation of the circumstance that every Budh is specially connected with some tree, as Shin Gautama with the bawdi-bin, the banyan, under which he attained his full dignity, and the eng-gyin-bin, the *Shorea robusta*, under which he was born and died, and, as we are told, the last Budh of this world cycle, Arimadeya, will receive his Buddhaship under the *Mesua ferrea*. Hence the regard for trees which the Burmans share with so many other nations, ancient and modern, and the fact that a clump of palmyras and tamarinds seen in the distance infallibly suggests a monastery. It is not to be supposed, however, that it was the intention of the Lord Buddha that the sacred order should remain far away from mankind in lonesome huts in the depths of the forest. Very early in his teaching, kings, nobles, and wealthy men vied with one another in erecting spacious and magnificent dwellings for the Budh himself and his disciples. Most noted among these were the Zetawun Monastery, built by the rich man Anatabein, within which the celebrated Mingala Thôt sermon was preached by the Buddha to a pious-minded déwa; the Pôppayôn Kyaung and that of Weluwun built by the wealthy dame Withaka and King Bimbathara of Razagyo, to both of which Shin Gautama frequently retired to spend the rainy season of Lent. These were all magnificently adorned; and it is expressly mentioned that the pious need spare themselves no expense in constructing and adorning such religious buildings, though the inhabitant of the most gorgeous of them dresses in no way differently from the humblest anchorite, and has no more costly utensils.

Ordinarily the monastery is built of teak, though in many places, both in Mandalay and Lower Burma, brick buildings are being erected, notwithstanding the prejudice that exists against them from their greater liability to damage in the case of earthquakes. The shape is always oblong, and the inhabited portion is raised on posts or pillars, some eight or ten feet above the ground. They are, like all the other houses in the country, never more than one story high; for if it is an indignity to a layman to have any one over his head, it is much more so to a member of the

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gathered from all parts of the country, many on gilt slabs of marble, a still greater number on sandstone. All day long circles of constantly renewed worshippers chant aloud the praises of the Buddha, and the air is heavy with the effluvia of candles and the odours from thousands of smouldering incense-sticks. Within the precincts of the pagoda is a large tank, tenanted by sacred turtle, who wax huge on the rice and cakes thrown them by the multitudes of pilgrims. Probably not even at the Shwe Dagôn Payā is more enthusiastic devotion shown than at the Payā Gyi in Mandalay. It [563] is regarded with special reverence by the Shans.

Near the royal city, about nine miles up the river, on the right bank, is a huge monster of a pagoda, built on a low green bluff, running out from the barren, pagoda-sprinkled Sagaing hills. The groundwork of the great misshapen Mengôn Payā covers a square of 450 feet and its height is 165 feet, about one-third of the elevation intended for it when completed; but Mintaya Gyee, the crack-brained monarch who founded it, ran short of funds, and the building was stopped. Nature was jealous of the miniature mountain —the largest mass of brickwork in the world—and an earthquake in 1838 rent the gigantic cube with fantastic fissures from top to bottom, and cast down great masses of masonry, tons upon tons in weight, and yet not sufficient to destroy the main structure, massive and imperishable as Time itself. There it stands, unharmed alike by rain-floods and blistering suns, and laughing even at earthquakes. According to Burmese custom, Bodaw Payā built a model [341] for the guidance of the workmen. This is called the Pôndaw Payā, and is fifteen feet high. This consists of a bell-shaped dome surmounted by a *sikkhâra*, a pointed spire, and resting on a square plinth of solid brickwork. It is a hybrid between the Shwezigôn and Ananda pagodas of Pagān, and has all the requirements of a place of worship, circuit walls, staircases, ornamented arches, and leogryphs.

Perhaps it was this proud stability which induced King Mindôn Min to attempt an even greater work. He planned a huge shrine to be raised east of Mandalay, under the shadow of the Shan hills. The Yankin-taung Payā was to be larger than the Mengôn monster, and it was to be built

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body-servants, carrying a gold-sheathed sword, a velvet pillow, spittoons, betel-nut boxes, and a variety of other things of uses more or less obvious. Last of all, surrounded by his page body-guard, comes the mintha himself, reclining in a wan, a finely-carved litter, borne by many shoulders. Many of the officials are, of course, unable to make such a grand display as this, but every one does his utmost to surpass his fellows in some point or other, and the result is a spectacle which would furnish abundance of valuable notions to a pantomime scenic artist racking his brains for novelties.

All the retinue is left outside when they come to the palace and ascend the broad flight of steps flanked by the two great gilded cannon, and approach the nandaw, the magnificent Hall of Audience. At stated points they pay lowly reverence to the graceful spire which rises over the throne and marks the centre of the palace, of the town, of Burma, and therefore of the universe. Inside the nandaw each man has his special place, according to his rank, Englishmen being ordinarily told off with ministers of the third grade. They sit there and smoke, placidly awaiting events.

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The Hall of Audience is a fine building of its kind; a long columned chamber, open on three sides, with gilt and red pillars, and a profusion of ornaments. The walls are made gorgeous with bits of looking-glass, porcelain, fragments of coloured glass, a mosaic of queer odds and ends fastened on with a resinous gum. This style of ornamentation is peculiarly Burmese, and is really very striking, though the materials may not seem promising. The effect of the whole is unique, if a little bewildering. It is like a compound chromotrope out of order. But close inspection gives an impression of tawdriness, and the national Burmese carelessness appears through all. Round the tops of the wooden walls runs beautifully carved lattice-work, but some of it has got broken in one place, and at another all the gilding has come off. There are some richly ornamented doors, but hinges have not been available when they were put up, and they swing on a sort of ball and socket contrivance which serves the purpose, but makes close-fitting and easy movement impossible.

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The throne stands at the far end of the hall on a high raised dais. It diminishes by a gradation of little ledges to mid-height, and then similarly expands, like one notched pyramid thrust down on another. Those of the royal blood sit ordinarily in front on either side of the dais, but there are lamentably few of the royal blood nowadays.

Every one is collected now. The scene is such as can be seen nowhere in the world but in Burma, and in Burma only in perfection in the Hall of Audience. A Burmese crowd is always a gay sight, but when all the highest in the land have assembled in the yôndaw, it is magnificent. The Tennysonian "wind-stirred tulip beds" is a tempting phrase, but it hardly seems sufficient. A stirabout of rainbows has an oriental sound about it, and perhaps more fitly suggests the brilliant contrasts of colour. What a magnificent sight it must be from the throne; the eye passing over the gaily dressed figures, every face bent low to the ground, down the broad steps, and through the towering eastern gate, over spires and pagodas away to the shaggy dark Shan hills beyond, like the entries to King Arthur's palace that

> Open'd from the hall
> At one end one, that gave upon a range
> Of level pavement where the king would pace
> At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
> And down from this a lordly stairway sloped
> Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers.

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Little wonder the king of Burma thinks himself a deity.

Meanwhile the collected worshippers smoke cheroots and chew betel, and talk freely. Suddenly a little bell tinkles, and every one is grovelling on his stomach in a second. A purple curtain is drawn aside, and down a long corridor, laid with crimson and gold carpet, the Sovereign of Life and Death comes with a hurried, uneven step. He is in full regal dress, and the broad gold shoulder-belt of the salwè and the towering jewelled crown on his head, seem to weigh heavily on him as he ascends wearily to the throne. Now comes the presentation of the kadaw. The actual presents are all lying tumbled in a heap somewhere, and his majesty probably never sees them at all. Lists are made out on palm-leaf, scratched on with a sharp-pointed style, and these are

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361 amingala or south-west gate, specially reserved for the passage of funerals. Outside every gate is a post bearing the name and emblem of the gate, the latter being the signs of the zodiac. Sixty feet, or thereabouts, from the walls, runs all round a deep moat, about fifty yards broad, covered in many places with the lotus plant that the Buddhist loves. Here and there upon it float a number of royal craft, state barges, and despatch boats, some of them richly gilded, with the kalawaik, the crane, carved on the stern, others foundered and lying rotting, with their lofty sterns rising high in the air. Covering each gate is a traverse, or crenelated barbican, of the same construction as the walls. Inside, the streets of the city run parallel to the walls. They are wide and fairly well kept wherever the king is likely to pass, but there is no attempt at metalling. Young trees line the sides, and [364] down most of them run little streams of water. There is no attempt at a drainage system, but the town is essentially clean and airy, the pigs and pariah dogs acting as scavengers, and the constant open spaces ensuring ventilation. Right in the centre is the palace, which has two successive enclosures. 644 341 The outer is a quarter of a mile square, and consists of a high teak palisade, very massive and compact. Within this is a wide open space laid out as an esplanade, inside of which is a brick wall, edged round a great part of the way by the houses of high ministers and court officials. The outer court has four gates, each presided over by a special commander; the north, or water gate, being only available for the royal barges. Except for members of the palace household, there is only admittance to the inner enclosure by the gate on the eastern face. There is a special portal in the centre here, opened only for the king, and none but the Lord of the Golden Throne may use it. All else must enter by the taga-ni, the red postern, a cramped little gateway, which makes the smallest man involuntarily bend his head as he approaches the golden palace. The front of the building is decorated with gilding and tinsel work, which looks well when it is new, but after the rainy seasons would be better not there at all. To the left is the Hlutdaw, the Hall off the Supreme Council, a detached structure, raised some feet off the ground, and perfectly open; the roof, richly

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carved with flowers and figures, and adorned with the usual flamboyant pinnacles, supported on massive teak pillars, painted vermilion colour at the base, and gilt higher up. Straight ahead is the great Hall of Audience, a colonnade, or columned arcade, extending along the entire eastern front, and opening directly upon it. At the end of a pillared vista stands the throne, on a dais, reached by five steps from the level of the hall. The top is a cushioned ledge, like the box in a theatre. Just over the throne, and in the centre of the palace, which is the centre of the city, which is the centre of Burma, which is the Turanian "hub" of the world, rises the seven-roofed spire, emblematic of royalty and religion. The princes of the highest rank sit in front to the right of the throne; those of the blood-royal, but not so closely connected, to the left. Then in regular gradation, opposite one another, the wungyi, atwinwuns, wundauks, and the minor officials. On either side of the hall of audience and behind are a number of minor throne-rooms, not rooms in the English sense of the word, but simply open roofed spaces, separated from each other by skirtings of planking, covered with gold-leaf, and supported by a multitude of teak pillars, dyed for the greater part of their height a deep red. Some rooms are almost entirely gilt, others are adorned with wall-paintings, others, again, with the favourite mosaic of bits of mirror and coloured glass, framed in a gilt network. Every room is furnished with one or more stands of arms; there is a rack of sadly ill-cared-for muskets round the throne itself. The palace is, in fact, a gigantic armoury. All the cannon and guns in the country are kept there. Hence it is that when the palace is taken by a usurper, the country is conquered. The abundance of gold-leaf ought to make the effect splendid, but the quantity of alloy there is in the gilding makes it speedily lose its glitter, and the general impression is that of dinginess, if not indeed of actual slip-shod tawdriness. But to be seen at its best the palace should be visited on a great beg-pardon day, when the rough plank floors are covered with gorgeous rugs and carpets, and the halls are filled with officials dressed in all the hues of the rainbow.

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There are a variety of matters to be carefully observed by all who enter, or have anything to do with the palace.

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644 Best known is the regulation with regard to the wearing of shoes. Burmans must remove them as soon as they enter the palace enclosure, just as they would on going inside of the parawun of a pagoda or a monastery. Englishmen and white foreigners generally are required to take off their [341] boots whenever they begin to ascend a step—the whole palace and all the buildings near it being on a brick platform some ten feet or more above the level of the ground. There are always a number of dancers and jugglers and loiterers about the royal buildings, and the necessity of being separated from your shoes sometimes leads to the loss of them altogether. It is on record that a British Resident incurred this misfortune, and had to make the best of his way, partly in a pair of Burman sandals, and partly on his stocking soles —as being preferable—to the outside of the teak stockade where his pony was waiting for him.

Another ceremony is that of shekhoing to the spire, the external emblem of the throne. All Burmans must do this at each of the gates, at the foot of the steps, and at intervals in between, according to loyalty, or the supposed friendly or hostile attitude of lookers-on. All the early English ambassadors had to conform to this regulation, notably Cox and Baker, the latter dropping on his knees. After an intermediate stage of taking off their hats, permission was gained to dispense with everything but the removal of shoes and sword. But the court rejoices in the fact that no one can pass through the red postern without bending his head, regulations or no regulations.

No arms whatever can be taken into the palace, not even —perhaps I should say, least even, in view of conspiracies— by the royal princes. Similarly, all umbrellas must be left at the outer gate of the palace, except by members of the royal household, who may carry them to the foot of the steps of the audience hall. Common people must lower them when they pass any of the gates outside. Arrest, or rough handling by the guards, would be the infallible result of non-compliance. Another rule is that you must take no money out of the palace. You may take in as much as you please.

No one in the palace, or indeed in the whole town, must sleep otherwise than with his feet turned outwards from the

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma(Chinese Indians)AP1
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village therefore remained, and has served to drag out a long suburb beyond the Arakan pagoda as a kind of connecting link. Numbers of later arrivals, however, settled in the royal City of Gems, and the wealthier merchants all eventually moved their headquarters thither, so that his majesty triumphed in the end. The best houses in Mandalay, the only brick ones, in fact, till the British came, are all in the possession of the Chinese and Indian merchants. Burmans had neither the right nor the money to build anything but wooden erections. These latter have, however, the compensating advantage that they stand all but the most violent earthquakes, while the brick houses, even when they are strengthened by an elaborate wooden framework, usually collapse when there is anything like a heavy shock.

But the great majority of the houses are simply wattled huts, with large open spaces in their rear which serve to keep the town airy and well ventilated. According to Burman custom each house has its little shop with the entire stock in trade displayed to the view of the passer-by. As in all Eastern towns, those who occupy themselves with a regular handicraft all flock together. Thus the umbrella-makers and sellers of saddlery live to the south of the palace, vendors of bamboo-work and lacquered boxes to the west, while the potters and miscellaneous goods shops are mostly along the street that leads to Payă Gyi, the Arakan pagoda.

There was no attempt at metalling any of the roads, except in independent times the broad thoroughfare which led up from the steamer ghaut, past the ministers' residences, up to the outskirts of the town, for Mandalay lies two miles away from the river-bank, the idea being that at Amarapura the noise of the foreigners' steamers disturbed the royal repose. The big stones which represented the metalling on this one road were rather a trouble than otherwise, except to the vultures and egrets in the wet weather, when all around was a sea of mud, and the boulders formed an eligible coign of vantage. Elsewhere the streets were cut into huge ruts, and the bullock-carts went along in the hot weather in a pyramid of dust, and in the rains a ploughed field would be smooth going in comparison. But the gaily-painted carriages which always suggest a dog-kennel on

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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175 there never was any attempt to imitate the Pali language and its
538 literature in the vernacular, and Burma offers no parallel to the
198 controversy among English Renaissance scholars over the merits and demerits of the vernacular.

175 The period of Pagan's ascendancy marked the zenith of Burmese
538 greatness and civilization. It was a great centre of trade, and visitors from afar talked of the glory that was Pagan. Its supremacy was unquestioned by the whole of Burma, which had been united into a kingdom for the first time. It even demanded and probably obtained nominal allegiance from the greater part of Indo-China and the governors of the outlying provinces of the Chinese Empire. But the period of Pagan's ascendancy was not a great period in Burmese literature. Her capital looked radiant with its golden temples, her kings were learned and powerful, her troops marched in triumph, but Pagan never forgot that no material thing was real, and everything decayed and perished. Therefore, the scholars were interested only in religious themes, and religious themes seldom offer adequate scope for the development of a great literature. Although the clearness of diction and the artistry of the death-song of the royal tutor, Anantathuria, composed while awaiting execution in 1173, indicate that at least a few must have practised the use of the vernacular for non-religious purposes, the efforts of writers in the vernacular were chiefly directed towards the recording of inscriptions, which are still
[172] preserved in countless numbers in the pagodas of Pagan.[1] Many of these inscriptions contain good prose. The earlier inscriptions tend to be bombastic through sheer wealth of learning; the scholars of Pagan could not at once learn to control their use of the newly-acquired scholarship, just as the earlier writers of the Renaissance in England failed to restrict their use of learned words. However, after a few decades, the bombastic style gave place to a simpler and more
175 concise diction. In addition to the narrowness of scope offered by
172 religious themes, there was another reason which prevented Pagan,
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[1] The death-song is one of the greatest poems in the language and is the oldest non-religious piece of literature existing in Burma. A translation is given in G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 55, and another in Tin and Luce, *The Glass Palace Chronicle*, p. 139.

G. E. Harvey, op cit. (p. 70) describes the inscriptions as 'richly human and intensely devout', and he ranks (p. 38) some of Kyanzittha's (1084–1112) inscriptions as literature.

[172] *Epigraphia Birmanica*, a Government publication, gives the text of the more important inscriptions with translations.

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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in spite of its greatness in other directions, from being a great period of Burmese literature. The love of beauty, which is the basis of all literature, had adequate satisfaction in the developed art of architecture. The poets of Pagan wrote their poems in bricks, instead of words, and their pagodas are still famous. When one stands on the shore of the Irrawaddy and looks towards the ruins of Pagan, one is reminded of the delicate beauty of an incomplete poem.[1]

Pagan fell in 1287 as the result of the Tartar onslaught during the time of Kubla Khan, the Scourge of God, and the country broke up into several little States, each attempting to control the others. For the next fifty years, political struggles went on in the capitals, but they failed to disturb the peace of smaller towns and villages. Many who had grown tired of the strife around the thrones flocked to the quiet of the village monasteries in order to find peace. Religion went on undiminished, but the learning connected with it decayed, for the royal patronage was lacking. Architecture also decayed because there was no royal support and because the country had become poor. Men turned to literature for its own sake, and during this period Burmese prose and poetry assumed definite forms with fully developed diction, rhythm, rhyme and style.[2]

[1] Many temples and pagodas of the Pagan period are in an excellent state of preservation and are still in use as places of worship. Scott O'Conner's *Mandalay and Other Cities* contains fine illustrations of the more famous of these religious buildings.

The achievement of the Pagan kings, the 'Temple Builders', is summed up by Harvey thus: 'The legacy of their fleeting sway has enriched posterity for ever. It was they who made the sun-scorched wilderness, the solitary plain of Myingyan, to blossom forth into the architectural magnificence of Pagan. If they produced no nation-builder like Simon de Montfort, no lawgiver like Edward I, they unified Burma for more than two centuries, and that in itself was an achievement. But their role was æsthetic and religious rather than political. To them the world owes in great measure the preservation of Theravada Buddhism, one of the purest faiths mankind has ever known. Brahminism had strangled it in the land of its birth; in Ceylon its existence was threatened again and again; east of Burma it was not yet free from priestly corruptions; but the kings of Burma never wavered, and at Pagan the stricken faith found a city of refuge. Vainglorious tyrants built themselves lasting sepulchres, but none of these men has a tomb. . . . These men's magnificence went to glorify their religion, not to deck the tent wherein they camped during this transitory life.'—*History of Burma*, p. 70.

[2] Ibid., p. 103. Since that time, prose and poetry show continuous development. The full history of Burmese literature still remains unwritten. However, the *Anthology of Burmese Literature*, a Government publication,

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
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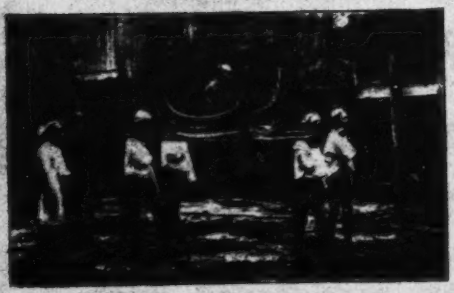

28. AGED YAHAN CARRIED ON YIN.

The majority of the *kyaungs* and buildings of Burma are constructed on piles. The country at large is mountainous. The Burman race monopolises the flat lands in the basin of the upper Irawadi — "the narrows" (*Anyá*)—in the same way as the Shan races do in the sphere of their influence and the Mun (or Taláing) race in the south (Pegu). The quasi-aboriginal races occupy the hill-land and mountains. The plains-dweller settles as near as he can to the natural waterways with which Burma is abundantly provided. In the drought the rivers recede to great distances from their flood-level margins. In order to be close to the channels, the houses have to be on high piles. The races of Burma adhere to their practice of pile-building even on elevated sites, such as those of the temples. The Burman wood architecture appears to have developed through the exigencies of pile-building and under the influence, as regards decoration, of an exotic masonry style. The Burman style possesses a naïve charm recalling the art of the "ages of faith" in Western Europe. It has a certain resemblance to the wooden church-building of Norway. The style was in full vigour up to the middle of the nineteenth century. Since that time novelties of type and manufacture have crowded in faster than they could be assimilated into the indigenous arts, on which they are foisted crudely (Nos. 60, 99).

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The affinities of Burman art above referred to, to the art of mediæval Europe, are extrinsic only. The "aspiring" character of the florid ornament, the quaint figures in their labyrinths of tracery, recall the crocketed niches and fantastic gargoyles of the

99. TEMPLE HILL.

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25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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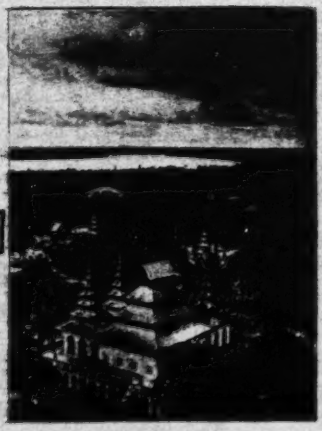

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60. DECADENT KYAUNG.

Gothic, especially in the richness of the *ensemble*. But the Burman decoration does not strike the eye as an efflorescence of the structure so much as an overlaying of it. The grandest work produces the effect of an elaborate model rather than a monumental achievement. The perspicuity of the play of forces operating in the structure, out of which the poetry of Gothic architecture flows, has a parallel in the Burman boat-building. But the effort which the land architecture incorporates, to interpret a masonry style in wood, was naturally productive of incongruities, despite the fact that the masonry was itself an interpretation of still earlier wood building. The outward incongruities have been mitigated in the unique style in which the genius of Burma has found expression. The stiff and monotonous feather-ornament of the Hindu gable (No. 74) has developed into the Burman flamboyant decoration. The bold finial is the sole element of the original which has been preserved literally (No. 62). The graduated ornament of the *pyatthat*, soaring above the verdure, recalls the proportions of some budding head-of-bloom—a case in point of the theory of the sources of architectural types, in the insensible suggestions of natural objects, expressed by Herbert Spencer. (*Essays*, vol. ii.) Through the Burman treatment types other than architectural, which Burma has borrowed, acquire a new and distinctive interest.

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61. ORNAMENTATION OF KYAUNG.

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When a *kyaung*, or any work of public utility, has been undertaken by the people of a village jointly, it is kept in good repair. But when it has been carried out at the cost of an individual—and this applies to most of the public works—the repairs are left to the founder and to his family, who have frequently

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
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71. TERRA-COTTA FIGURES AT THADYA PAYA, THATON.

of the Buddha, set against the column which supports the dome or Hindu cone. The later domes are pure vaults without central support. In these ancient temples the conical *zedi* now so typical of Burma forms the finial only, held like a jewel, by four cusps. The lowermost portion of this structure resembles an inverted *thabêt*, the name of the homologous part of the modern *zedi*. Possibly this forms the actual reliquary or is the symbol of the same.

An example of direct imitation of Indian monuments is the *Bawdi Payá*. It takes its name from the *Bo* tree at Buddha Gáya in Bahár, and is a florid reproduction of the *stupa* there. It was built by King Zeyathinka about 1220 A.D.

The temple named after Ánanda, the chief disciple of the Buddha, was built by King Kyansitthu about 1080 A.D. Both the temple (No. 8) and the *thein* and *kyaung* adjoining (Nos. 64, 74) are in full preservation. The gigantic lattice gates of the inner temple are of teak-wood and probably coeval with the masonry.

The most imposing of the ancient monuments and the one which marks the best period of the Pagán architecture is Thappyinnyu Payá, built by King Alaung Sitthu, about 1100 A.D. (No. 73). Its height is two hundred feet or more.

[532] In the mural decorations at Pagán the Indian character is as marked as in the buildings themselves. India has evidently furnished the subjects of the Burman designer and trained his style (Nos. 272, 94).

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The Burman bricklayers had at one time lost the art of arch-building. A pointed arch like the Gothic is used in the temples of ancient Pagán (Nos. 75, 76).

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The images of the Buddha (*sindu*) are the principal features of the interior of the ancient temples, the true character of

73. BAWDI PAYA, PAGAN.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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209. THE HAMADRYAD.

one commonly notices. A great lizard (*put*), weighing twenty to forty pounds, infests hollow trees; it is shot and eaten by the Burmans, and its skin used for sandals. Most of the venomous snakes of India are common to Burma, excepting the small and deadly *krait*. The formidable hamadryad is added, but there are no fully established cases of the pursuit of man which is attributed to this snake. The casualties due to snake-bite are chiefly among the reapers. The gigantic python is not dangerous to man. Scorpions and centipedes are common enough, but their stings and bites are not often serious.

Good clay for pottery is only found in certain localities, and from these the manufactures are sent to great distances by water. Clay almost stone-hard and laterite are pounded with a tilt-hammer, screened, and worked up in certain proportions with water and sand, by treading with the feet. The best and strongest pots for cooking are not turned on the lathe but *patted* into shape by hand. These are but slightly porous and of a hard consistence. The lathe pottery is very porous when not glazed. A salt glaze is used for jars to store oil. For ornamental work, lead glazes, coloured with vitriols, are employed. At the potteries, immense reverberating kilns are built for firing the pots. Smaller kilns are fired all round or are excavated underground on the plan of the lime-kiln. Wood is the fuel used.

210. POTTERY—PATTING THE WARE INTO SHAPE.

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Stone for building is scarce, except in Arakán. Masonry is reserved for the *zedi*. Of late, owing to a fresh impulse from India, masonry has again come into greater use. Everywhere in the inhabited plains one

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

211. LATHE POTTERY.

comes upon bricks, and on nearly every hill bricks bear evidence that at some time a *zedi* had crowned the top. In the moist region the disintegrating effect of the vegetation is such that frequently no indication remains of the form of the original structure. The use of brick doubtless came in with the early Buddhist architecture exemplified at Pagán. The brick-fields are on the confines of the rice-fields, and of the same character as to soil, a light loam. The work begins in November after the ground has dried. The surface soil is rejected and the earth dug with mattocks a yard or two deep. The clods are soaked in water and trodden into a doughy mass with an admixture of rice husk. The bricks are moulded direct on the ground, which has been smoothed beforehand, and are left to dry in the sun (No. 181). Before stacking the dried bricks, the lower or rough edge is trimmed with a *dá*. The commonest size of brick is 12" × 6" × 1½". A burn consists of ten thousand bricks and sells for about forty-five rupees. In the dry zone, brick has always been used for house-building to some extent, unless when prohibited by the government. In the south, the brick-work is invariably plastered over with *ingade* to prevent the clay mortar from washing out. Now that bricklaying in Pegu has passed into the hands of masons from India, lime-mortar is usual.

The limestone rocks which are a feature of the Eastern Peninsula, rise abruptly from the plains to heights of one to three thousand feet (No. 107). They are honeycombed with fissures which facilitate quarrying. During the floods, boats can approach and be loaded with the stone. Lime is used for whitewash, plaster, mortar, and for chewing

212. FANCY POTTERY, SHAN.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 API Burma
Burmese AP4

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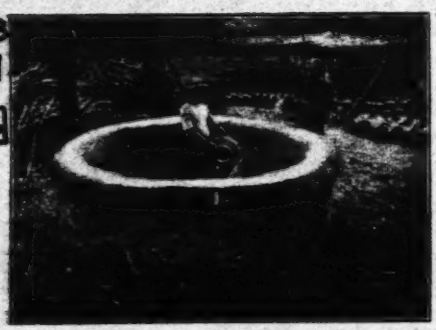

213. KILN FOR PATTED WARES.

with betel. The limestone rocks abound in caves, many of which have been incrusted with images, and transformed into temples and shrines (No. 84), but the rock is not hewn. The lime is packed in baskets of leaf and bamboo-wicker, a stone or two in weight; it sells at the kiln for one and a half to two rupees a hundredweight. The tenacity of the Burman lime-plaster is very great. Strength is obtained by liberal use of lime, and in the better class of work by the addition of glue and palm sugar. Hair and fibre are not added. For the first layers, coarse sand is mixed with the lime, for the finishing layers, fine sand. The decoration of the work is only roughly indicated in the masonry. The relief of the ornament is high, and the thickness of the stucco very considerable in parts. The stucco is frequently gilt, on *zedi* and images. The gold-size (*thissi*, p. 101) is applied direct to the plaster, which, however, in time, furnishes a soil for lichen, causing the gold to scale off.

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Although stone is not quarried in sufficient abundance for building except in Arakán, good stone for carving images is found in several places. The most notable of these is Taung-u, on the Irawadi, opposite Pagán. More important than the red sandstone industry of Taung-u is the industry at Sagáing, opposite Ava, on the Irawadi, where a beautiful white marble is quarried. The heavy blocks are hewn in the rough at the quarry and transported to the site of erection to be finished. The subjects are chiefly the conventional images of the Buddha, from a pound in weight to several tons (No. 218).

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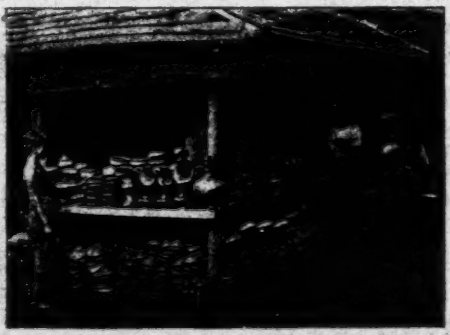

214. POTTERY SHOP.

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The cordage used in

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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221. UMBRELLA MAKERS.

of the work can be done on a lathe. To prepare the wicker for lacquering, it is first given a "rough-stuffing" of fine clay to fill the interstices. The work is then painted with *thissi*, which penetrates and toughens the clay and binds the fibres of the wicker. When the *thissi* has set, which takes several days, the work is put on the chuck of a bow-lathe and ground smooth with a fibrous stone—a petrifaction-product. Varnishing and grinding are repeated till the surface is smooth, colour being added to the later coats. Then a coat of contrasted colour is given, and when the varnish is about half set, the pattern is chipped with a metal style through the fresh layer to the hard lacquer beneath. After the work has hardened, the patterns are embellished by scoring rings through the layers, with a tool like a carpenter's gouge, so as to bring out the underlying contrasts. The patterns are arabesques and conventionalized figures.* Subject designs are also executed (No. 224). Finally the lacquer is polished with buffs of graduated fineness. A peculiarity of *thissi* is that it sets hardest in a moist atmosphere. Every manufacturer has an underground cellar—a thing almost unknown in Burma—for the wares to harden in. Pagán, the centre of the industry, is at the same time the driest locality of the dry zone. The finest lacquer, which is only made by a few highly-skilled workmen, is so elastic that the lips of a cup may be brought to meet without the ware cracking. As much as twenty-five rupees is paid for a cup of such quality. The ordinary ware has not the tenth part of this elasticity, and sells for one to ten rupees a box. The deep cover of the betel-box is the traveller's ordinary drinking-cup.

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222. LACQUER-WARE MANUFACTURE.

* See the end-papers of the binding of this volume.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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344. MIXED HILL-CROP OF RICE, SESAMUM, AND TEAK, IN SEPTEMBER (P. 149).

of being nearly all heart-wood, having considerable strength, with moderate hardness and weight, working easily with axe, saw and chisel, taking nails, and above all, not rusting nails or iron in contact with it. It has a serviceable brown colour and an odour by which it may always be distinguished, due to the presence of an oil which repels the attacks of insects, notably of the termites, and which protects it from decay. Teak is in short the prince of eastern woods. At the end of the eighteenth century, teak was already being worked out of the Burma forests and brought to port, where the foreign shippers had established saw-pits for squaring the logs. The steel pit-saws found their way into trade and gave an impetus to wood architecture, of which the ecclesiastical buildings of Burma are the chief examples. Timber-traders started building teak ships in Burma, employing Chinese carpenters. This business has been abandoned, but lighters are still built.

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The teak-tree (*tectona grandis*) occurs in patches of the dry mixed forest, the forest namely of which the principal element is a deciduous bamboo, with timber trees of fifty or more deciduous species scattered through it. Of these species about half a dozen produce serviceable timber. The bamboo-stools send up their culms to heights of forty and sixty feet in the course of a few weeks, before their branchlets and leaves appear. By means of this the bamboo has the advantage over all other vegetation. The seedlings of trees have to struggle up under its cover. At intervals of twenty to thirty years the bamboo species flower, to grow again from seed. Then is

345. FLUE OF FACTORY DISUSED TEN YEARS.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 API Burma
Burmese AP4

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202. ROPE-STATION ON THE SALWEEN (KYODAN).

current, a remarkable device is employed. Two ten-foot handspikes, with a shoulder two feet above the point, have mooring-rattans from each end of the raft, one hundred feet long and an inch thick, bent on to them. One of these is sent ashore from the forward end of the raft and worked like a plough in the bank, going deeper as the raft slews round and the tension increases, and so stopping its way by degrees. If the first attempt fails a second is made from the other end of the raft, which is then the forward one. Arrived in port the logs are dragged up the mud-banks by elephants. But when the path is blocked, a powerful elephant sometimes carries a log bodily. The whole of the operations of bringing the timber to market are combined by a timber-broker (forester, *thiggaung*).

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Teak cuts readily, though it blunts the tools very soon. There is little waste. Sawn planks are displacing bamboo for the better-class houses. Sawyers earn from one-half to one rupee a day. The indigenous carpenter's tools were a small adze (*pègôt*), chisels and gouges (*sauk*), awls (*hun*), and a rough saw (*khwa*), besides *dâ* and axe (*paussein*). The Burman adopted the Chinese plane (*yut-haw*, "selecting-shave") with the Chinese straddle bench. The English carpenter's rule is also general. When the impulse to good house-building was given by the production of cheap planks, the immigrants from China got the whole of the work. The Burmans have begun to oust them from the heavy carpentering and from the joinery as well. Ordinary Burman carpenters earn ¾ rupee a day, the better workmen 1 to 1¼ rupees a day, compared with the Chinaman's 1½ rupees. The wood-work is left

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203. SINKING THE LOGS INTO RAFTS.

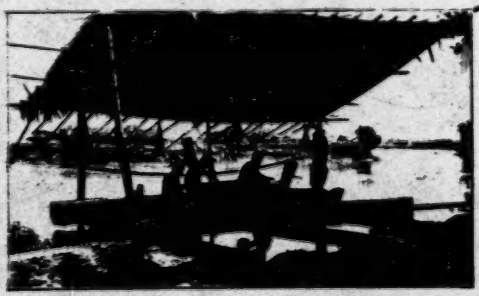
25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

264. TIMBER-RAFT.

plain or is oiled with crude petroleum. A wooden house of the modern Burman pattern costs from three hundred rupees upwards; a bamboo house only twenty to sixty.

The Burman turning-lathe is of the usual primitive type; two poppets sliding in a bed, with centres to hold the work, round which a cord passes from the simple treadle-bar to a springy lath or bamboo overhead. But of late, mandril-lathes have been constructed after models in the steam-mill workshops (No. 187). Mechanical construction has great attractions for the Burman, and is stimulated by the high wages of labour. The foremen sawyers at the steam-mills are Burmans, the other hands natives of India. Menders of clocks and sewing-machines are in all the towns. An engine-erecter, who had set up machinery in most countries of Europe and Asia, said he had nowhere met the same natural aptitude for handling machinery as in Burma (*cf.* p. 10).

The floral wood-carving of Burma is remarkable for its freedom and spontaneity. Rich as the floral tracery is, the animal grotesques are laboured and deficient in fancy. The carving is done in teak-wood when it is meant for fixtures; otherwise, *yamané* is preferred. The tools employed are chisel, gouge, and mallet. The design is traced on the wood with charcoal, gouged out in the rough and finished with sharp fine tools, using the mallet for every stroke. Teak-wood and *yamané* have a coarse grain, in which fine detail cannot be rendered. Small and delicately elaborated figures are carved in sandal-wood and also in ivory. Whole tusks are carved over with figures of the Buddha and are dedicated in the *kyaungs*. In some of these the figures are modelled in a single piece under an



265. SAWING UP THE LOGS.

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

378. THE PALACE GARDENS.

the cause of suffering and death, and the discredit reflected on officialdom by its methods, lead the best elements of the population to shun office, as a touching of pitch. The dearth of ability and character in the governing classes leaves the governed without efficient protection. The religious motive further operates in withholding information about criminals.

A pregnant category is that of the "five enemies"—Fire, Water, Robbers, Rulers, Ill-wishers. The governors and deputies who acted as judges heard causes at the *yôn*, an open shed in a public place. But every cause was presented in the first instance at the house of the official, and it is contrary to accepted ideas of politeness to approach a superior empty-handed, even on a mere visit of courtesy. The *pros* and *cons* of the case were understood before the regular hearing. At the hearing, the advocates of the parties (*ashé-ne*) publicly presented their pleas and the evidence was recorded. The Burmese form of oath is to take the *kyanza* in the hands, a book of imprecations which the witness invokes on his head if he should speak falsely. The judge or judges intimated their finding to their clerks (*sayé*), who recorded it in official style and read it out. The punishments awarded to criminals and the condition of prisoners were much like those prevailing in Europe at the time of the Renaissance. Every judgment of importance was registered in the *Hluttaw* or chancellery at the capital, presided over by the four chief ministers (*Wundyi*), through whom all royal commands to the governors of provinces issued. There was no regular system of appeals. The Hindu code of Manú served as a body of law, and statutes were decreed by the kings; but *thwaza* (custom) supplied standards of a more practical and stable nature.

379. ROYAL MAID OF HONOUR (APYODAW).

31: Scherman--2 E-4 (no date) 1915 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

/203/ TYPES OF HOUSES IN BURMA AND ASSAM

by

L. Scherman, Munich.

(With one map, 17 illustrations in text and Plates IV-X.)

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341 The traveler coming from India to Burma will, in addition to the change in the racial types, notice the strange architecture of the buildings, their floors resting on piles about one to one and one-half meters above the ground. By this characteristic they contrast sharply with the construction methods of the great cultural zones: India, China and the kindred Tibet, between which Burma, a British Indochina, is wedged. They adhere to that familiar system which is customary farther south in the archipelago and the South Sea Islands. The geographical and anthropological passage by land is through Assam, and here the Tibeto-Burmese mountain people, surrounded by levelling Hinduism, still cling predominantly to the pile dwelling which is found in Burma as the general norm. In the rest of Indochina, e.g. Siam and French Indochina this norm continues, if it has not given way to Chinese influence, which makes itself felt also at Bhamo, at Burma's northeastern border. At Siam's southern tip adjoins the already-mentioned civilization with its pile dwellings, more rightfully called Malayan (1).

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1. cf. the popular survey by F.V. Hellwald, Haus und Hof in ihrer Entwicklung mit Bezug auf die Wohnsitten der Völker /The Development of House and Farm in Relation to the Housing

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Practices of the People/ (Leipzig, 1888), pp. 106 ff.: Die Pfahlbauten der Gegenwart /Pile Building Today/. About Oceanic architectural styles, in connection with Indonesia, but without mentioning Indochina, reports the systematical work by Herman Frobenius, Zeitschrift für Bauwesen /Journal of Architecture/ Vol. 49 (1899), pp. 553-580. Ethnologically important clues about the predominant house types in Melanesia are given in connection with his theories about the Indonesian-Melanesian migrations by G. Friederici, Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse einer amtlichen Forschungsreise nach dem Bismarck-Archipel /Scientific Results of an Official Research Trip to the Bismarck Archipelago/ Vol. 3 (Berlin, 1913), pp. 156 ff.

Burma displays her principle of pile architecture in the humble village hut as well as in the luxurious buildings for secular and religious purposes in so far as they are built in wood, and the palaces of the rulers as well as the monastery buildings for the use of the monks are made of wood. Pagodas and temples, however, and frequently monastery libraries, are made of brick, occasionally of stone, the latter only in ancient times.

We find the "classical" models for these religious buildings at the famous ruin sites of Pagan. These buildings were put up between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, the days of splendor of the Empire of Pagan, the golden age of Burma's religious architecture. Here India was responsible for the architecture which had undergone manifold changes through eastern influences. Secular buildings from this era of Pagan have not survived; the wood did not withstand the

341 climate and the insect erosion.

The style of Pagan's stone architecture is still traceable in the form of the wood structures of the monasteries and the palaces of the rulers of the last era of the Burmese Empire, especially in /204/ the characteristic door arches which terminate in horn-like points and the pyramidically rising storey roofs.

An enormous gulf sets this architecture apart from the ordinary Burmese dwelling. One cannot help marvel that a people who have such strong feeling for proportion and graceful flow of lines as to create these most magnificent buildings for its princes and monks, and covered them with a wealth of imaginative carvings, with gold and glittering glass mosaics, that such a people would live in mean, plain, wooden or bamboo huts with scanty house furnishings, even if they can afford something better.

This glaring incongruity is first of all explained [656] (2) by the Draconian rules of the old

2. About the general influence on the art of the dwellings cf. H. Schurtz, Urgeschichte der Kultur /Ancient Cultural History/ (Leipzig, 1900), pp. 418 ff.

Burmese class and luxury code. Brick buildings were definitely prohibited--they might have been used as fortifications during revolutions--and it had become second nature to the Burmese that lacquer work /Map--Distribution of House Types--Analyst. --Key: ....Pile dwelling. _____ Ground level dwelling. .....Both types in use./ and gilding, carved door arches and storey roofs should be permitted only on the dwellings of princes and monks who are equal to the former in rank, with restrictions on the houses of other high dignitaries. Even now, after the British 341 rule gave a wider range of freedom to the subjects, following the deposition of the degenerated royal

341 family (in the year 1887), the Burmese rejects the idea of covering his house with princely trimmings in the manner of the occidental upstart. He prefers to adopt European comfort directly. Now the display of greater luxury no longer jeopardizes property and life, as in the days of Burmese despotism when one had to guard against the avarice of princes and powerful officials.

342 576 The Burmese dwelling, the simple hut just as the resplendent palace and monastery, has only one storey. Of course we must disregard innovations which gradually encroach, through occidental influence. The main reason probably lies in the belief of the people that it is undignified to stay under the feet of others. This would be particularly unbecoming for monks; in a modern two storey brick building in Mandalay which had once belonged to a Burmese princess, I saw a separate staircase, specially built for visiting monks which led directly from the entrance over the ground floor into the upper storey.

342 The size and the layout of the house (3)

3. About the construction of the Burmese house: Gazeteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States (Rangoon, 1900/01), Part I, /205/ Vol. 2, pp. 161 ff., M. and B. Ferrars, Burma, 2nd ed. (London, 1901), pp. 56 ff.; Shway Yoe (Scott), "The Burman, His Life and Notions," 3rd ed. (London, 1910), pp. 76 ff. The above-mentioned Gazeteer, a very informative and important work, will always be quoted below as UBG.

varies in accordance with the needs and the /205/ means of the occupants. The average Burmese house (Plate IV, 1) has its entrance from the broad side which faces the street. There, a veranda (zayanta) projects, which is raised only a little above the ground and which usually ex-